

Percentage of teen drivers continues to drop

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(Phys.org) -- Thirty years ago, eight in 10 Americans ages 17-19 had a driver's license. Today, it's six in 10, say University of Michigan researchers.

In a follow-up to their previous studies examining the percentage of young persons with driver's licenses, Michael Sivak and Brandon Schoettle of the U-M Transportation Research Institute say the trend has accelerated.

In 1983, about 87 percent of 19-year-olds, 80 percent of 18-year-olds and 69 percent of 17-year-olds owned a driver's license. Twenty-five years later in 2008, the percentages were 75, 65 and 50, respectively.

New data presented by Sivak and Schoettle shows that in 2010, those numbers have plummeted even more: about 70 percent of 19-year-olds, 61 percent of 18-year-olds and 46 percent of 17-year-olds had a driver's license.

In their research update appearing in the journal [Traffic Injury Prevention](#), Sivak and Schoettle extend their analysis by using driver's license records and general [population data](#) from the [Federal Highway Administration](#) and the U.S. Census Bureau

While their findings show that the reduction in the percentage of [teen drivers](#) with a license continued in 2010, they also reveal a decline in the number of driver's licenses for people of most age groups—except for slight increases for those 25-29 and those over 70.

"Overall, the observed decrease in driver licensing is consistent with the continued increase in Internet usage," Sivak said. "In our previous research, we found that the percentage of young drivers was inversely related to the proportion of Internet users. Virtual contact, through electronic means, reduces the need for actual contact."

Provided by University of Michigan

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